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WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A UFC FIGHTER



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It takes a whole lot of hard work and dedication to become a UFC fighter. Most fighters fight professionally in smaller organizations for years and have extensive training in multiple disciplines before the UFC will even consider allowing them in the cage. These fighters are hand picked from the best of the best and the few chosen ones make it to the pinnacle of MMA fighting - The Octagon™.

Training is a Full Time Job... and Then Some

UFC fighters train enough hours each week to make it their full time job. Some of the up-and-coming fighters even juggle an additional full time job on top of their training regimen. Each fighter has his own training "camp" consisting of several coaches and sparring partners to prepare a specific strategy for the next fight. Some fighters hold their training camp at one gym, others travel with their camp to multiple gyms to focus in specific disciplines, while others set up their training camp in a remote location to move away from their families and avoid any distractions.

As the bout approaches, training slowly tapers to allow the fighter's body to heal from the intense sessions and recover as much as possible by fight night. (Even tapered, these training sessions would make most men lose their lunch.)

“Morning practice consists of strength and conditioning, along with pad work and technique, where the afternoon practice is more geared towards sparring. We train six days a week, two practices a day with Sundays off to recover.”

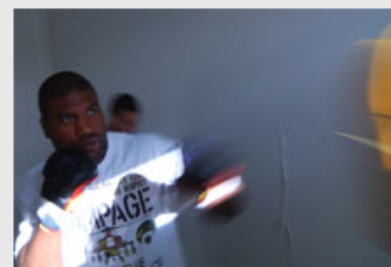
- Mark Hominick

Every Ounce Counts

Fighters maintain a rigid diet regimen, and rarely cheat with junk food, in order to maintain the weight required for their weight class. This strict form of eating clean is high in protein and includes plenty of vegetables and whole grains. Certainly, diet and nutrition guidelines vary from one fighter to the next, depending on whether they're trying to gain weight, lose weight or maintain. Eating is no longer a fun and enjoyable activity. Food is just fuel for the body to endure the intense sparring and endless training sessions. When a fighter needs to make weight, even water is a luxury.



Two former light heavyweight title holders discuss the training it takes to become a world champion. [▶](#)



Rampage Jackson invites you into his secret gym where he prepares for his upcoming matches. [▶](#)



Demian Maia teaches Oklahoma running back DeMarco Murray some of his world-class Brazilian Jiu Jitsu techniques. [▶](#)



Fighters have to transform their bodies to make them as tough and durable as humanly possible. Individual training goals vary from conditioning the body for long periods of high intensity fighting, to training the heart to return to a resting heart rate within the first minute after a round. Repetitive punching drills are done to toughen the skin, tendons, muscles and connective tissues of key body parts used in fighting. Forearms and shins are intentionally pounded to create microfractures, which build up calcium deposits and make the limbs more dense and resilient when striking.



Cain Velasquez fine tunes his skills just days prior to entering the Octagon™.



“ A typical day of training is to go to Sergio Penha’s and work my grappling/wrestling/small glove MMA sparring. Come home, shower, eat, nap. Then in the evening I’ll go to One Kick’s gym and do my big glove sparring with takedowns & pad work. ”

- Stephan Bonnar



Urijah Faber has his diet and training down to an exact science.



Always On The Mend

Fighters have a full range of methods used to repair their bodies after extreme physical exertion, including ice baths, recovery shakes, acupuncture or visits to the chiropractor. After each event, fighters are evaluated by doctors who decide how long they need to recuperate. Concussions can take months to heal, broken noses take at least two months to heal (and can even be sore for one year) and broken hands or feet take even longer.

A Fighter Has to Want It - Really Want It

This is not a sport for the light-hearted. With so many eager up-and-comers, it’s critical that these athletes stay mentally motivated and emotionally hungry so they give everything they’ve got to end fights with a knock out or submission. From cauliflower ear to torn tendons and broken bones, UFC fighters push their bodies to the extreme and then can’t wait to do it again.



Incorporating multiple disciplines into his training allows Cain Velasquez to maintain control in any position during his fights.



Yves Jabouin astonishes Georges St-Pierre with his speed during their training.

